

### 3 An ecofeminist analysis of worldviews and climate change denial

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#### **Introduction: can we see the air that we breathe?**

We don't often think about breathing – even less about the air that we breathe – yet the atmosphere that provides us with oxygen surrounds all things, sustaining plants and animals alike. Cultures are like the air that we breathe. They surround us and are essential to how we live and what we think. They shape human beings long before humans are aware of their influences, long before we are able to decide whether or not we wish to adopt the outlooks and ways of the community we are born into. Cultures teach us such simple things as how to greet others, and such complicated things as what is sacred. Cultures dictate what foods are eatable, how to eat those foods, and what sorts of food formalities are required at the communal table. The culture we grow up in also shapes our worldview – how we envision the world around us, and how we understand our place in the world.

Only with the interconnected world slowly pieced together by explorers, then by cars, boats, and aircrafts, and now by the Internet, have people become somewhat more aware of the influence of culture. We can now see that what we take for granted is not a given. We can see that we do not necessarily eat what others eat, that we do not eat how others eat, and that food formalities differ across cultures. We can also see that our worldview – how we understand ourselves in relation to the larger world, including birds and trees, rivers and stones – varies across cultures.

How we understand ourselves in relation to the larger world affects the environment. For example, climate change as we know it has stemmed from the activities of humans who hold a particular worldview, yet it affects all humans – all living beings. Climate change has disrupted seasonal rainfalls for millions of crop dependent people, has lifted temperatures enough to drive species to extinction, and is in the process of raising sea-levels to threaten billions of people in communities along the ocean. “While many of us have the resources to move if necessary, the world's least advantaged human populations are unable to escape the impacts of climate change” (Roberts, 2017, p. 1). For many who are disempowered, climate change threatens their very existence. The indigenous Alaskan community of Shishmaref recently voted to relocate their entire village because their homes were falling into the ocean, because the ground is eroding

under the force of rising seas (Groc, 2017, p. 12). When humans suffer, wildlife suffers: "The biggest climate-driven threats are likely to come from human communities affected by changes in weather and climate", who encroach on the habitat of other vulnerable species (Can We Help Wildlife Adapt by Crowdsourcing Human Responses to Climate Change? p. 5). There can be no doubt that not only humanity suffers from the ravages of climate change. Though humans have caused this rapid change in climate, many species – billions of living beings and almost every ecosystem – is at risk because of climate change.

Despite the dire effects of climate change, those who are empowered – those who have caused the problem and those who are able to respond in some meaningful way – are slow to respond, and their response is completely out of proportion with the threat posed by climate change. Many empowered people deny climate change – with regard not just to the changes that climate change will bring (and is bringing), but also to the very existence of this well-documented, global phenomenon. In fact, those in power have generally chosen to go right on feeding climate change, though this monster-of-our-making will ultimately threaten not only indigenous peoples and other species, but their way of life, and the very lives of their offspring.

Because factory farming is the number one cause of greenhouse gas emissions (GHGE) (Kemmerer, 2014, pp. 5–17), as well as industrialization and lifestyle more generally in "developed" nations, peoples of more industrialized nations have disproportionately contributed to climate change. These nations – Greco-diaspora<sup>1</sup> cultures, especially the United States<sup>2</sup> – are largely to blame for climate change, and so these nations are responsible for making the sacrifices to slow and eventually reverse climate change. Citizens in the United States, in particular, tend in the reverse direction, not only refusing to make changes, but conveniently denying that there is any need for such changes. (I suppose there is no greater evidence of U.S. guilt and complicity than the denial machine organized by the U.S. corporate lobbies despite rapidly accumulating global evidence indicating a hastening progression into the claws of climate change; Dunlap & McCright, 2015)

Those of us who are responsible for this problem (in large part) must be willing to recognize, acknowledge, and address the problem if we are to slow the process, and perhaps prevent some of the most devastating likely outcomes of our current trajectory. Given that culture surreptitiously shapes our worldview, which shapes our relationship with the larger world around us, it makes sense to examine the Greco-diaspora worldview behind climate inaction to see if there is anything likely to fuel indifference to the natural world, or even malevolence towards nature.

Climate change is rather a new experience, yet the deadly changes that come with climate change are upon us and continue to move forward with momentum that cannot be easily reversed. Now is the time to consider how the Greco-diaspora worldview might be implicated, and how rethinking our worldview might help alleviate some of the forces that undergird our tendency to plow mindlessly forward into the fires of climate change – especially the massive corporate interests that have fostered U.S. corporate and political climate

change denial. What is nature? What is our outlook towards nature? How do we envision our relationship with nature? How does this guide human-nature interactions? Exploring the answers to these questions in the Greco-diaspora worldview might help us to understand how lobbyists, public relations, and policy makers living in Greco-diaspora nations feed the flames of climate change, and how we might consciously intercede to shift the deadly trajectory from the deadly path we currently travel.

Cultures foster worldviews that maintain "recalcitrant truths" that appear as "permanent and fixed" even though they do not exist outside of the culture where these views are held (Medina, 2011, p. 25). Worldviews "hide ossified valuations and rigidified beliefs", and if we are to be proactive in shaping our future, this "body of truths always has to be critically revisited in the light of new experiences" (Medina, 2011, p. 25). Human caused climate change is a new experience for those of us who currently populate the planet. This chapter demonstrates how ecofeminist theory can help us to critically examine, deconstruct, and rebuild the Greco-diaspora ideology that feeds climate change and that fosters the indifference and lethargy of our response to this critical environmental threat.

### Ecofeminism: dualism, hierarchy, and oppression

In 1974 Françoise d'Eaubonne coined the term *ecofeminism*, calling women to unite in an ecological revolution that would dismantle patriarchy. Most fundamentally, she connected the exploitation and degradation of the natural world with the exploitation and degradation of women. Her interest was not solely sexism, or the empowerment of women. d'Eaubonne sought the "destruction of male power to make way, not for female power or matriarchy, but for new egalitarian gender relations between women and men and between humans and nature" (Howell, 1997, p. 232). She recognized that the damaging imbalance of power between men and women was part of the damaging imbalance of power between humanity and the natural world.

Fundamentally, ecofeminists agree that the domination/oppression of women and the domination/oppression of nature "are intimately connected and mutually reinforcing" (Gaard, 1993, p. 1; King, 2003, p. 458) via systems of oppression: Oppression is "legitimized and perpetuated by various institutions such as the state, the military, religion, the patriarchal family, and industrial capitalism" (Heller, 1995, p. 351). Given that oppressions are interconnected, the ecofeminist quest for solutions draws freely from the fundamental tenants of a number of social justice movements, including "peace movements, labor movements, women's health care, and the anti-nuclear, environmental, and animal liberation movements" (Gaard, 1993).

In their search for forces undergirding sexism and environmental degradation, ecofeminists have implicated patriarchal religions, animal agriculture, and/or a fundamental worldview rooted in dualism and hierarchy (Fisher, 1979, p. 381). Because dualism and hierarchy are central to the Greco-diaspora worldview, the third option seems to undergird the other two. This diaspora has

a tendency to view the world dualistically and hierarchically, positing a host of things/beings as ideal prototypes (Prototype category), with other things/beings viewed as their opposites and as lesser (Not Prototype) (Adams, 1995, pp. 39–59).

In Table 3.1, *Prototype* contains the preferred (valued) model – the prototype – while *Not Prototype* holds those beings and things denigrated *in relation* to the Prototype category: Man over woman, human over chicken, white over Latinx, and hetero over queer and trans. This supports the ecofeminist understanding that both women and nature are denigrated (Not Prototype) in relation to men and culture/civilization (Prototype), and that the two oppressions are interconnected.

This dualistic vision must be recognized as *false* value dualisms because the dualistic categorizes presented are neither opposites nor mutually exclusive. For example, humans carry a variety of karyotypes, including 45 X, 47 XXX, 48 XXXX, 49 XXXXX, 47 XYY, 47 XXY, 48 XXXY, 49 XXXXY, and 49 XXXYY (Callahan, 2009, p. 62). Another example stems from the dualistic vision of black and white – and of white versus people of color more broadly. Anthropologists have discovered that the oldest skeletal remains for any human being are found in Africa, and it therefore seems likely that all humans trace their ancestry to Africa – especially given that there were no geographical barriers preventing human movement between Africa, Europe, and Asia (MacEachern, 2012, pp. 41–42). We might ask ourselves “how many ‘whites’ and ‘blacks’ actually have skin that is white or black?” (MacEachern, 2012, p. 36). Just because Greco-diaspora peoples conceptually divide humans into races “does not imply that those races are real biological units, any more than the fact that people tell ghost stories implies that ghosts really exist” (MacEachern, 2012, p. 36). A final example is provided by humans in relation to animals. Humans are primates, mammals – animals – and therefore cannot be opposite what they are. Moreover, all that lives is part of nature, and nothing living can be opposite that which it is.

False value dualisms undergird and enforce denigration, othering, and oppression. In order to maintain this power structure – and gain the advantages

Table 3.1 False value dualisms.

<i>Prototype</i>	<i>Not Prototype</i>
Human	Not Human
Civilization	Not Civilization
White	Not White
Productive	Not Productive
Mind	Not Mind
Heavenly	Not Heavenly
Controlled	Not Controlled
Able	Not Able
Hetero/Sic	Not Hetero/Sic
Propertied	Not Propertied

of exploitation – those in power strive to “maintain a strong distinction and maximize distance” between dominant and subordinate individuals, between Prototype and Not Prototype (Plumwood, 1991, p. 23). This Greco-diaspora worldview not only erroneously polarizes pretty much everything that exists theoretically, but then proceeds to devalue one side of the equation. Not only females but *anyone* found unfit for the Prototype category falls into the subordinate Not Prototype category: “Unmanly” men, “uncivilized” humans, humans who are not recognized as productive, able, and/or who are not heterosexual. These devalued “Not Prototype” individuals are then viewed as lesser, and wherever possible, as means to the ends of the dominant group. False value dualism creates a hierarchy in which all that is on the Prototype side is favored over all that is on the Not Prototype side. Men, whites, culture, human beings, minds, civilization – and many more, such as production, youth, thinness, Christianity, and capitalism (Adams, 2003, p. 50; Lorde, 2000, p. 527; Fisher, 1979, p. 381). A worldview rooted in hierarchy stems from false value dualisms, and all things on the Not Prototype side are devalued *together* in relation to all things on the Prototype side.

They are devalued together in that *any* entry in the Not Prototype category is understood to be closer to other entities in the Not Prototype category than they are to *any* entry in the Prototype category. In a “dualistic worldview, men and women, civilization and nature, are not simply defined as polarities, but all that is associated with women is devalued and subordinated” in relation to all that is associated with men and maleness (Kheel, 2008, p. 38). Those in the Not Prototype category are viewed not just as interrelated, but as interrelational – as part of a large “family” of Not Prototype. For example, women and animals<sup>3</sup> tend to be viewed as closer to nature than men – but of course this is impossible, since humans are animals, and animals are all part of nature. Similarly, women and people of color tend to be viewed as less civilized and less rational than those on the Prototype side, while those who are differently abled or non-heterosexual tend to be viewed as nonproductive. Because Not Prototype individuals are viewed as Not Prototype in more than one dimension, they are also viewed as yet more denigrated and more exploitable. For example, a woman of color (both not man and not white) is likely to be viewed as yet lower on the hierarchy of beings than a man of color (who is at least male, even if not white – though he may have one Black parent and one white parent, being equal parts Black and white). A lesbian is likely to be denigrated as not man *and* not heterosexual *and* not productive *and* closer to nature and animals. False value dualisms and ensuing hierarchy are foundational to the Greco-diaspora worldview, undergirding such pervasive problems as sexism and male privilege, homophobia, and a disregard for those who are differently abled and/or aged – especially older women, who fall into the emotive/non-reasoning category, and are also considered no longer productive, since unable to use their wombs to produce sons.

All that lies on the Not Prototype side is viewed not only as lesser, but also as requiring male protection/management *and* *thence* exploitable. For example, women and farmed animals are often viewed as helpless and dependent

(De Welle, 2003, p. 86), requiring both male protection and the expertise and skills of men. Women and anymals are viewed as requiring men to take care of them, and in exchange, available to serve the needs of men, satisfying their appetites for flesh, for example, and their desire for offspring and property. This is evidenced by social expectations and laws that accept, expect, and permit the exploitation of women and anymals, and have long held anymals and women as property. Some of these property laws have been changed in Greco-diaspora communities with regard to women – but certainly not with regard to anymals. In the 1970s, for example, laws began to emerge in the United States allowing legal recourse for wives raped by their husbands. But only in 1993 did spousal rape become a crime in all fifty states (Hogan, 2012). Within my lifetime it was legal for married men in any U.S. state to force themselves on a partner – the idea being that a man was entitled to use his wife for sex. Anymals and women, down through time, have been expected to service men in power in exchange for upkeep. Anymals and women who did not fulfill the expectation of production and reproduction were often dismissed/dispatched.

The necessity that men protect women is most strongly reinforced through sexual violence, especially rape.<sup>4</sup> In the United States, “violence is seen as sexy and sexuality as violent” (Buchwald, Fletcher, & Roth, 1995, p. ii). Even though sexual assault crimes are known to be underreported, U.S. reports indicate that roughly every 2.5 minutes someone “is sexually assaulted”, while one in six women have been raped or have experienced an attempted rape (Valenti, 2007, p. 64). The United States fosters a rape culture that encourages “male sexual aggression” and supports “violence against women”, condoning “physical and emotional terrorism against women *as the norm*” (Buchwald et al., 1995, p. ii, *italics in original*). “Violence against women is at epidemic levels in the United States. Sexual assault, intimate partner violence, harassment, and stalking are part of many women’s daily lives” (Valenti, 2007, p. 61). Men in rape cultures such as that of the United States tend to “see the female as existing for male use and male gratification” (Fisher, 1979, p. 36). Meanwhile, women in rape cultures tend to be perpetually concerned about the possibility of sexual assault, especially rape – they are “used to feeling unsafe”, and habitually “do things throughout the day to protect themselves” (Valenti, 2007, p. 63). In rape cultures, fear of rape often determines where and when women travel, what they carry with them, and what they are thinking about as they move through public (male) spaces, which they know to be potentially unsafe – for females because of males.

Women are exploitable. Anymals are exploitable. All that is on the Not Prototype side is viewed as available for all those on the Prototype side. Ecofeminists point to the interconnected nature of oppression, to dualism and hierarchy as undergirding oppressions – “Racism, the belief in the inherent superiority of one race over all others and thereby the right to dominance. Sexism, the belief in the inherent superiority of one sex over the other and thereby the right to dominance. Ageism. Heterosexism. Elitism. Classism” (Lorde, 2000, p. 527). Ageism, ableism, and speciesism are also on the list of prominent Greco-diaspora oppressions. Because they recognize that oppressions are rooted in a world-view of dualism and hierarchy that fosters systems of oppression, ecofeminists

recognize that the “struggle for women’s liberation is inextricably linked to abolition of all oppression” (Gruen, 1993, p. 82).

### Dualism, hierarchy, oppression, and animal agriculture

A cow exploited for dairy in the United States suffers from at least three forms of discrimination: She is not male and not human, and is therefore assumed to be not rational. A cow exploited for dairy is a farmer’s property, and has no legal right to liberty, bodily integrity, or even life. Labeled “animal”<sup>5</sup> and irrational, she is viewed as having no innate value as an individual, and is legally manipulated and exploited from birth to death by those in the Prototype category.

In the dualistic worldview, most cows are viewed as having one thing going for them – are seen as productive – at least for a few years. Viewed as a productive female, a cow’s suffering is both physically and psychologically unique because the exploitation she experiences is rooted in her female biology. Before being exploited as flesh for eating (along with much younger male bovines), she is exploited for about five years for her reproductive biology; for nursing milk. Naturally, like humans, a cow only lactates if she is pregnant and gives birth. Ironically, the milk she produces for her young becomes the focus of the farmer’s economic interest, while her calf – precious to her as to any mother – is viewed by the farmer as nothing more than a byproduct of the dairy industry, even if a byproduct that can be sold for profit.

Ranchers exploit male bovines differently because steers have no capacity to be impregnated, give birth, or lactate, and so they are exploited solely for their flesh. Except for a very tiny percentage of bulls who are exploited for sperm, steers are slaughtered at about 9 months.

Cows are not unique in the world of farmed anymals – all factory farmed females suffer in particularly painful ways *because of their reproductive biology*, and they suffer for a *longer period of time* than their male counterparts. When working for legal changes on behalf of farmed anymals, anymal activists naturally target what is deemed to be the worst practices. For at least a decade, activists have focused on the extreme confinement of veal crates for calves, farrowing and gestation crates for sows, and battery cages for hens. The common denominator for each of these extreme mechanisms of confinement is the exploitation of female reproductive capacities. Millions of calves, snatched from the loving care of their desperate mothers shortly after birth, are stuffed into tiny veal crates so that *we* can consume their mother’s milk. “Veal production in the U.S. remains closely tied to the dairy industry”, and “the U.S. produces more than 150 million pounds of veal annually” (Veal, 2017). The mothers of these calves also suffer greatly. They suffer from repeated, forcible impregnation, repeated childbirth and kidnapping, and what must seem to them an endless cycle of milk production in which they are milked for ten out of twelve months of every year. Cows exploited for dairy are repeatedly put through this painful cycle until they are no longer considered productive – though only about a quarter of the way through their natural lifespan – at which time they are sent to slaughter (Kemmerer, 2011, pp. 6–9).

Sows and hens are also exploited for their reproductive capacity, and in the process, as with cows, they suffer both psychologically and physically in ways that other farmed animals do not suffer. Like cows, sows are repeatedly, forcibly impregnated. They suffer extreme confinement in gestation and farrowing pens, when they are pregnant and when they are nursing, respectively. In the process, as with cows, they are repeatedly forcibly impregnated. Whereas piglets would normally nurse for nearly four months, they are taken away after just two or three weeks with their mother. Some 100 million sows and their offspring are slaughtered annually (Kemmerer, 2011, pp. 9–10). After they are 18 weeks old, 300 million “laying” hens are housed in extreme confinement for the rest of their very short lives. They are kept in these tiny battery cages because we exploit them for their reproductive eggs. Though their wild counterparts, junglefowl of India, produce only about twenty eggs per year, factory farmed hens are manipulated so that they produce upwards of 250 eggs annually. Yet they never hear the peep of a chick, or see their offspring flap their little wings as they learn to fly (Kemmerer, 2011, pp. 10–13).

Not only cows, sows, and hens suffer in particularly excruciating ways – psychologically (from never actually being allowed to reproduce and raise young, and from the loss of their young). Hens and sows exploited for eggs and offspring also suffer from extreme confinement. Cows, sows, and hens also suffer in particularly painful ways physically – from forced impregnation and excessive production. They also suffer much longer than their male counterparts because they are exploited for their reproductive capacities. Factory farmed cows suffer seven times as long as their male counterparts; factory farmed sows and hens suffer twelve times as long as males of the same species (Table 3.2).

Cows, sows, and hens suffer *because* they are females – *because* they are exploited for their reproductive powers. Cows, sows, and hens suffer repeated, forcible impregnation, extreme confinement, and maternal deprivation. Like Sojourner Truth, wouldn't these suffering, cruelly exploited individuals cry out – “Ain't I a female, too?” (Kemmerer, 2011, p. 23).

Female farmed animals fall into the false dichotomy of not male, not human, not rational, and not civilized. In the Greco-diaspora worldview, all they have going for them is their productive capacity, and so they are exploited for their reproductive capacities . . . and then slaughtered. The value of their lives is measured only through what those on the Prototype side can glean from the

Table 3.2 Comparison of farmed animal suffering based on sex.

	Months/weeks for males	Years for females	Lifetime production	Well-known sufferings of females in industries
<b>Cows</b>	9 months	6 years (7 × as long)	150 tons of milk	Downed cows, rape racks
<b>Sows</b>	6 months	6 years (12 × as long)	120 piglets	Gestation/farrowing pens
<b>Hens</b>	6 weeks	1.5 years (12 × as long)	350 eggs	Battery cages

exploitation of their reproductive capacities – their young, their nursing milk, their reproductive eggs, and then, finally, their flesh.

### An ecofeminist analysis of animal agriculture and climate change

In the Greco-diaspora worldview, animals, women, and the natural environment are pushed onto the Not Prototype side – and they are viewed as more closely connected to one another than to those on the Prototype side. Animals, women, and the natural environment are all denigrated in relation to those on the Prototype side. They are all assumed to require the management and protection of those on the Prototype side, and subsequently as available for exploitation by those on the Prototype side. How does this ecofeminist analysis help us to better understand climate change?

Animal exploitation is the number one cause of GHGE. Consuming animal products creates ten times more fossil fuel emissions per calorie than does consuming plant foods directly (Oppenlander, 2011, p. 18). Animal agriculture creates GHGE via:

- Producing grains to feed farmed animals (70 per cent of grains in the U.S. and 60 per cent of grains in the EU are grown to feed farmed animals (Kemmerer, 2014, p. 8), which means that the machinery manufactured and run with fossil fuels to plow the land, transport seeds, store seeds, plant crops, weed crops, store and transport chemical fertilizers and herbicides, spread chemical fertilizers and herbicides, harvest, transport produce, store produce, and so on are all on behalf of animal agriculture).
- Tending (throughout their shortened lifespans) and transport of farmed animals and their nursing milk and reproductive eggs.
- Slaughter, transport, and storage of animal products (body parts, nursing milk, and reproductive eggs).
- Farmed animal respiration (carbon dioxide), cud chewing (potent methane), and other gases released by billions of farmed animals – all of which are accentuated in grass-fed production.
- Manure decomposition (which create the most potent greenhouse gas, nitrous oxide).
- Deforestation to plant crops to feed farmed animals, and so to graze farmed animals.

(Kemmerer, 2014, pp. 5–17)

The Greco-diaspora worldview denigrates farmed animals (as Not Prototype in almost every way) to the point where they are treated as objects for exploitation, rather than as individuals with personalities, with lives to be respected. Because of the Greco-diaspora worldview, they are cruelly exploited *en masse* for flesh, dairy, and eggs. Because the Greco-diaspora worldview affords no respect to farmed animals, animal agriculture despoils the Earth. Yet, like the

air that we breathe, we do not see our worldview, let alone the suffering and devastation that follows from this worldview. Most of us living in the Greco-diaspora don't even know that all of our most pressing environmental problems stem from anymal agriculture (Kemmerer, 2014):

- The production of feed crops for farmed anymals, and grazing, are the primary causes of deforestation.
- Manure in water systems is the primary cause of water pollution and dead zones.
- Watering crops (again, 70 per cent of grains in the U.S. and 60 per cent of EU grains are fed to farmed anymals) is the number one cause of freshwater reduction.
- Overgrazing (and deforestation for grazing and feed crops) is the primary cause of desertification.
- Anymal agriculture is the number one anthropogenic cause of GHGE. (Kemmerer, 2014)

Ecofeminists note that denigration and exploitation of all that is on the Not Prototype side, viewed as dependent and exploitable, are inherent in the Greco-diaspora worldview. Moreover, this denigration causes tremendous environmental damage. And where the exploitation of female and anymal interjects, this results in the greatest suffering *and* the greatest environmental damage. Lactating cows consume about 20 gallons of water and 56 pounds of grain per day, depleting freshwater reserves and requiring an army of gas-guzzling trucks to do all that is necessary to produce large quantities of grain (Kemmerer, 2014, pp. 11–12). Of course, what goes in must come out, and just one lactating cow produces about 150 pounds of waste every day (Kemmerer, 2014, p. 18). As cud-chewers, kept alive much longer than their flesh-producing counterparts, cows exploited for dairy also produce GHGE in the form of methane, and again, they produce more than any other exploited bovines – particularly if they are grass fed (Kemmerer, 2014, p. 15). Consequently, if one cares about the planet, “it is much better to be quarter-vegan than 100 percent vegetarian” (Halley, 2015, p. 159). As ecofeminism indicates, the denigration and exploitation of anymals and females are linked with environmental devastation – including climate change.

What we consume is of critical importance with regard to climate change, but *how much* we consume is also vital. Again, ecofeminist analysis of the Greco-diaspora worldview, of dualism, hierarchy, and environmental degradation, offers insights into the problems of overconsumption.

At least in part, consumption stems from the number of humans consuming, and in turn, this is affected by birth rates, which are dependent on the status of women in a particular community. Birth rates drop naturally, alleviating environmental degradation, when women are empowered – when women feel they have opportunities and options in life (Kemmerer, Kirjner, Gross, & Baillet, 2015, pp. 263–264). Empowered women also tend to wait longer to have children, often skipping a generation (Kemmerer et al., 2015, pp. 263–264).

Having fewer children and skipping a generation are critical for slowing human population growth.

Lowering birth rates is particularly vital in Greco-diaspora communities, where the value placed on production and reproduction has spawned and fosters capitalism, which has fostered extremely high consumption patterns. For those born into Greco-diaspora communities, every birth comes packaged with comparatively high levels of consumption (Kemmerer et al., 2015, pp. 261). For example – and most importantly – Greco-diaspora peoples tend to consume more anymal products, which makes their environmental footprint astronomically larger than that of other peoples. Greco-diaspora nations also tend to use carbon-crunching cars and take hot showers on a daily basis, and use air conditioning in the summer and heaters in the winter (Kemmerer et al., 2015, pp. 259–261). All of this is harmful to the environment – much more harmful than living without these unnecessary luxuries. The Greco-diaspora worldview not only disempowers women, leading to higher birth rates than would otherwise be the case, while simultaneously celebrating production and reproduction, but also denigrates the environment so that the damaging effects of human population and our exploitation of the natural world (in the form of consumption) scarcely register.

Helping one denigrated, oppressed category (women and/or anymals) helps other denigrated, oppressed categories (the environment). As ecofeminists note, oppressions are interconnected so that respecting females and anymals will reduce environmental degradation, including greenhouse gas emissions that foster climate change.

### Philosophies of interconnection

As noted, concepts and entities viewed as polar opposites in the false value dualisms of Greco-diaspora cultures are easily understood to be connected and interrelated. To offer yet more examples, heterosexuality and homosexuality exist on a sliding scale, and are not mutually exclusive. Similarly, no one is fully abled or fully disabled when we consider such things as memory, genetic predispositions, condition of teeth, vision, social skills, a slightly shorter leg, and so on. While such differences may be prohibitive in some ways (someone with a short leg is not apt to be a gymnast, and someone with weaker vision is not likely to become a pilot) all living beings have a variety of such differing conditions and abilities. Like sexuality, disability exists on a sliding scale. Finally, mind/reason/spirit and body/emotion are connected via a physical brain, from which thoughts, reason, *and* emotion stem.

Moreover, dualistic opposites do not exist in nature. Dualistic opposites support extant power structures – they support and defend the privilege and power of those who are white, male, able-bodied human beings. This method of categorization, like all cultural worldviews, only exists within the mindsets of Greco-diaspora people. But it does not exist in all mindsets of Greco-diaspora people. Needless to say, some (if not many) of those on the Not Prototype side are likely aware that they are not lesser than those on the Prototype side, that they are not inherently exploitable for the purposes of those who imagine that

they are more important. Still others (frogs, grasses, small children, river ecosystems, and people who live in relative cultural isolation) are not even aware of the nonsense of false value dualisms of Greco-diaspora communities. Outside the worldview/mindsets of many in Greco-diaspora communities, there is no reason to hold men over women, whites over Blacks, humans over chickens, or mountains over mole-hills and pebbles. This is only a Greco-diaspora worldview of where individuals stand in relation to one another and in relation to the world. Nonetheless, those firmly within this cultural tradition are likely to find it almost impossible to imagine any human who does *not* believe that humans are above chickens – in fact, most Greco-diaspora individuals are likely to find it extremely difficult to imagine a world without a hierarchy of being. Similarly, people living in other cultures likely find it difficult to believe that any human could envision themselves as separate from, let alone above, a chicken (or any other living being). For example, in the Sioux worldview, which “deeply values nature and wildlife”, it is understood that “all animals – two-legged, four-legged, everything – are equal” (Lee, 2017, p. 8).

When faced with pressing problems like climate change, it behooves us to “uncover how truths have been made” and seek out “competing and alternative truths” (Medina, 2011, p. 26) – not only the Sioux worldview, but many indigenous worldviews, and worldviews from Asia, as well as insights provided by science. Indigenous cultures (such as Sioux culture), though all unique, tend to more readily recognize humans as animals – and animals as people. Indigenous worldviews are more likely to recognize humans as one community among many communities of being, each marvelous and each marvelously interdependent (Kemmerer, 2012, pp. 23, 38–39). *Ayllu* is an Andean, Quechua word that refers to one’s extended family, their larger community. For the Quechua, “it is not only that everything is alive, but that everything is a person with whom one converses and shares, equally” (Valladolid, 2001, p. 655). *Ayllu* “refers to the family that extends beyond just the human relatives. The rocks, the rivers, the sun, the moon, the plants, the animals are all members of the *ayllu*. All those that are found in the territory where they live in community are their *ayllu*” (Valladolid, 2001, p. 656). Indigenous peoples tend to “recognize their own villages as part of a larger community that includes *all* of the natural world” (Kemmerer, 2012, p. 23). Philosophies and religions of India offer a vision of oneness in which all living beings, all of history, the present, and the future, are inextricably interconnected. In the Hindu spiritual understanding, through eons of karma and reincarnation, all beings will have been and therefore *are* in some measure male and female, cow and frog, Latinx and Native American. Hindus “see themselves in every living being, and . . . every living being in Self” (Kemmerer, 2012, p. 63). As all rivers join to one sea, which rises again into the atmosphere to become individual drops, so all living beings – whatever form they might take – are united and interconnected (Müller, 1962, p. 102). The ground of each individual’s being “is identical with the ground of the universe”, whether that individual is mollusk or bird (Embrete, 1972, p. 59).

Buddhism emerged in India and accepted core philosophical visions of the Hindu tradition, including reincarnation, karma, and a vision of oneness and

interconnection from the larger Indian philosophical tradition. It is therefore not surprising that, over time, Buddhism developed “a vision of radical oneness, of interidentification, where all entities are identified with all other entities” (Kemmerer, 2012, p. 103). Radical oneness teaches that “I am one with the wonderful pattern of life which radiates out in all directions . . . I am the frog swimming in the pond and I am also the snake who needs the body of the frog to nourish [his or her] own body” (Allendorf, 1998, pp. 43–44). Buddhist oneness suggests not only that we are all “in this together”, but that we *are* this, “rising and falling as one living body” (Cook, 1977, p. 229). How, then, can a chicken be of lesser value than a human being?

Finally, consider the Greco-diaspora vision of hierarchy in light of biology, which teaches us that humans (like all animals) are ultimately and fundamentally dependent on plants for their existence. Vegans (deer, rabbits, and so on), omnivores (including bears and coyotes), and carnivores (largely felines and raptors) require greens, for none could live without grasses and shrubbery that sustain the atmosphere and feed the vegans and omnivores, as well as carnivores (who eat vegans and omnivores). Given the fundamental importance of greens, the dependence of all flesh on plants, everything green and growing, lies at the foundation of existence, and is therefore more important to life than animals – particularly humans, who do little to help ecosystems and much that is damaging to the natural world. Moreover, if the ability to persist and live compatibly on planet Earth is any measure of evolutionary fitness, then humans must be recognized as a very low life form indeed, for we seem incapable of living peacefully either with one another or with other living beings and the natural environment. These two worldviews (indigenous cultures and Indian philosophies and religions), and science, allow us to see the Greco-diaspora worldview in a fresh light, a light that exposes our worldview as narrow, arrogant, and shallow – as failing to reflect the complex, interdependent world in which we find ourselves. In this light, the Greco-diaspora, dualistic, hierarchical worldview appears groundless and misguided. Indeed, the “truths” of the powerful are often clouded by self-interest and ignorance.

## Conclusion

The Greco-diaspora worldview presented and critiqued in this chapter undermines climate change denial and resultant inaction, all promoted by incredibly powerful special interests through their flush public relations campaigns. Human understandings of our rightful relations with one another and with the natural world are shaped by culture, our community’s worldview. But *Homo sapiens* are often “unable to understand the world that they themselves have created” – to recognize their worldview as nothing more than that (Medina, 2011, p. 31). Seeing our worldview for what it is, especially the damaging Greco-diaspora worldview, can help us to work against climate change – and climate change denial.

Ecofeminists expose false value dualisms and hierarchy as central to the Greco-diaspora worldview – the worldview of those largely responsible for both climate change and climate change denial – and as justifying the exploitation

of the many, and of the natural environment, by and for the few. Ecofeminists reveal how the denigration and exploitation of women are linked to denigration and exploitation of cows and sows and hens, and how the denigration and exploitation of all that is deemed not male and not human lead to the denigration, exploitation, and destruction of the environment. They expose the Greco-diaspora worldview as false, as harmful to individuals, as ecologically destructive, and as fundamentally unjust. Ecofeminists implicate the Greco-diaspora worldview, as invisible as the air that we breathe, in fostering climate change and climate change denial.

Ecofeminism is an integrative, holistic *theory* rooted in a conception of interconnection, and an integrative, holistic *practice* that "requires activism consistent with analysis" (Howell, 1997, p. 233). As individuals we can work against climate change if we examine *our* part in the problem, if we change *our* lives accordingly. To do this, those of us who come from Greco-diaspora cultures must own and let go of any privilege and power granted us by false value dualisms. Those of us from the Greco-diaspora must stop othering, denigrating, and exploiting farmed anymals, women, lesbians, people of color, "weeds", soils, and so on. When we examine our Greco-diaspora worldview, and see the resultant damage – when we see the connections between our largely unnoticed worldview and the ravages of climate change – we can let go of these misconceptions and change how we look at the world and how we live in the world.

Once we have adjusted our personal lives (go vegan, for example), we can reach out to others, and we can share what we have learned. We can help others to recognize false value dualism and hierarchy, resultant denigration and exploitation, and we can show them that it is not difficult to let go of privilege – whether white, human, hetero, or male privilege. As we bring our actions in line with our knowledge, we can invite others to walk beside us by lobbying, public relations outreach, and from positions of leadership in social justice organizations. Luckily, the worldview of Greco-diaspora peoples is just one among many possible worldviews. Ecofeminism, alongside worldviews from other cultures, offers an alternative vision, one of interconnections and respect for life and the environment. If we work at it, we can see the air that we breathe, recognize our utter dependence not just on the atmosphere but on this planet, and choose to change our outlook and our actions.

## Notes

1. *Greco-diaspora* refers to nations and cultures that look back to their roots in ancient Greece. These nations are often termed *Western*, but I do not use this term because it reveals a certain narrowness of vision – west of what?
2. U.S. culture stems most immediately from England, more distantly from ancient Greece, and more broadly from Western Europe. These nations/cultures and any nation/culture that stems from any one of these areas are implicated in this chapter. I focus largely on U.S. culture for several reasons: To point the finger inward – because this is the culture with which I am most familiar – and because the United States seems to be a more-so affect in comparison with other Greco-diaspora nations/cultures.
3. *Anymal* (a contraction of *any* and *animal*, pronounced like "any" and "mal") refers to all individuals who are of a species other than that of the speaker/author. This means that if a

human being uses the term, all species except *Homo sapiens* are indicated. If a chimpanzee signs *anymal*, all species (including human beings) will be included except chimpanzees. Using the term *anymal* avoids the use of:

- *Animal* as if human beings were not animals
- Dualistic and alienating references such as *non* and *other*
- Cumbbersome terms such as *nonhuman animals* and *other-than-human animals*

See Kemmerer (2006).

4. Rape is generally defined as "forced intercourse", whether oral, anal, or vaginal, whether the force is physical or psychological (Valenti, 2007, p. 65). Sexual assault is "unwanted sexual contact", including touching, kissing, standing so as to rub up against someone, attempted rape, and rape (Valenti, 2007, p. 65; Schwartz & DeKeseredy, 2015, pp. 620–621).
5. "Animal" is in quotes to remind that humans are also animals, and so this term is misused when used as a way to "other" animals that are not also human beings.

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